Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-30 Cancelled.

31. (NEW) A purified polypeptide comprising an amino sequence selected from the group consisting of:

    SEQ ID NO:2;

    a functional variant of SEQ ID NO:2; and

    a fragment of SEQ ID NO:2 consisting of amino acid residues 43-150.

32. (NEW)The purified polypeptide of claim 1, wherein the polypeptide is an antagonist that specifically binds to NFAT activating receptor ligand and inhibits the action of the receptor.

33. (NEW) The purified polypeptide of claim 32, comprising an amino acid sequence consisting of amino acid residues 43 to 150 of SEQ ID NO:2 or antagonist fragments thereof.

34. (NEW) An isolated polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of:

    SEQ ID NO:1;

    a functional variant of SEQ ID NO:1; and

    a fragment of SEQ ID NO:1 encoding amino acid residues 43-150 of SEQ ID NO: 2.

35. (NEW) The isolated polynucleotide of claim 34 comprising a nucleotide sequence that encodes a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of amino acids 43 to 150 of SEQ ID NO:2 or antagonist fragments thereof.

36. (NEW) An expression vector comprising the nucleotide sequence of claim 34.

37. (NEW) An isolated host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 36.

38. (NEW) An isolated antibody or a antigen binding fragment thereof that binds specifically to SEQ ID NO: 2.

39. (NEW) The antibody or fragment of claim 38, wherein the antibody is polyclonal, monoclonal, humanized, human, bispecific, or a heteroconjugate.

40. (NEW) A method for producing the antibody of claim 38 comprising:

(a) using SEQ ID NO: 2 as an antigen;

(b) using host cells that express SEQ ID NO: 2 as an antigen; or

(c) using a DNA expression vector comprising a polynucleotide capable of expressing SEQ ID NO: 2 as an antigen;

and exposing a host animal to said antigen to generate antibodies that bind to SEQ ID NO: 2.

41. (NEW) A screening method for identifying NFAT activating receptor agonists and antagonists, comprising the steps of:

(a) exposing a cell expressing SEQ ID NO:2 to a potential NFAT agonist or antagonist; and

(b) determining whether the potential agonist or antagonist binds to SEQ ID NO: 2.

42. (NEW) The method of claim 41, wherein the NFAT activating receptor agonist or antagonist is an antibody.

43. (NEW) A screening method for determining whether an agent is likely to cause undesirable side effects associated with reducing or increasing cytokine and cellular receptor production when administered to an animal for the desired indication, comprising the steps of:

(a) exposing a cell expressing SEQ ID NO: 2 to an agent; and

(b) determining whether the agent binds to SEQ ID NO: 2 or mimics the biological function of the receptor ligand by causing a change in cytokine production.

44. (NEW) A method for blocking or modulating the expression of a NFAT activating receptor by interfering with the transcription or translation of a DNA or RNA polynucleotide encoding the NFAT activating receptor comprising exposing a cell expressing SEQ ID NO: 2 to a molecule that interferes with the transcription or translation of a DNA or RNA polynucleotide encoding SEQ ID NO: 2.

45. (NEW) The method of claim 44, wherein the molecule is selected from the group consisting of antisense nucleotides, RNAi nucleotides, and ribozymes that interfere with the proper transcription or translation of a DNA or RNA polynucleotide encoding SEQ ID NO: 2.

46. (NEW) The method of claim 44, wherein the molecule is an antisense nucleotide that interferes with the proper transcription or translation of a DNA or RNA polynucleotide encoding SEQ ID NO: 2.

47. (NEW) A method for diagnosing the predisposition of a patient to develop diseases caused by the unregulated expression of cytokines, comprising the steps of:

(a) collecting a cell, tissue, or body fluid sample from a patient suspected of having unregulated expression of cytokines;

(b) analyzing the cell, tissue or body fluid for the presence of SEQ ID NO:2; and

(c) predicting the predisposition of the patient to certain immune diseases based upon the level of SEQ ID NO:2 in the sample.

48. (NEW) The method of claim 47, wherein the level of SEQ ID NO:2 in the sample is compared to a defined or tested level established for normal cell, tissue, or bodly fluids.

49. (NEW) A method for preventing or treating an NFAT protein mediated disease in a mammal comprising administering a sufficient amount of the antibody of claim 38.

50. (NEW) A diagnostic method for detecting NFAT activating receptor expressed in specific cells or tissue, comprising:

(a) exposing cells or tissue to an antibody of claim 38; and

(b) detecting the presence of antibody bound to said cells or tissue.

51. (NEW) A method for isolating and purifying NFAT activating receptor from recombinant cell culture, contaminants, and native environments, comprising:

(a) exposing a sample containing NFAT activating receptor to an antibody of claim 38;

(b) allowing the NFAT activating receptor to bind to the antibody;

(c) separating the antibody-receptor complexes from the sample; and

(d) recovering the NFAT activating receptor from the complex of step (c).

52. (NEW) A transgenic knockout animal whose genome comprises a heterozygous or homozygous disruption in its endogenous NFAT activating receptor gene that suppresses or prevents the expression of SEQ ID NO: 2.